



The Spectacle

From the Office Down the Hall

Time for the Stars

Ever since I was little, I have always loved to stare at the stars. At various times I have even learned their names (just to forget them again in the morning). On a clear winter night, far from the city, stars have an intense, stark beauty you can almost touch—despite the also dissonant impression of infinite space and time. But perhaps they are not entirely beyond our reach? Rigel Kentaurus, also known as Alpha Centauri, is the third brightest star in the night sky and is also one of the closest (though it is rarely seen from the northern hemisphere). At 4.3 light years away, it is as close to us as Uranus is to the Sun. Tonight the image of Rigel Kentaurus, as reflected in the slow currents of the Amazon, left its home in December 2001, about the same time I left Yosemite National Park for Arlington House. It was not so long ago.

There was a lot to learn and do as I settled in at Arlington House—including plan for the future. Though, like Rigel Kentaurus, that seemed far away in 2001 and difficult to imagine. Perhaps that is due in part because in many ways, Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial is a place of the past. We dress in the fashion of our great-great grandparents and walk the halls of Robert E. Lee's legacy. Albert Einstein said, "I never think of the future—it comes soon enough."

And sure enough, like the inexorable light of a distant sun, here it is: the year we close the House for construction.

During the course of the Civil War, Lee once said: "No one can say what is in the future, nor is it wise to anticipate evil. But it is well to prepare for what may reasonably happen and



Arlington House, December 2002

be provided for the worst." There has been a lot of talk about this upcoming rehabilitation and restoration project and some trepidation on how we will operate while it is underway. But don't anticipate too much evil. This is not only a wonderful opportunity to safeguard the mansion, it is also a chance for us to offer new and unique ways to experience Arlington House.

First a recap. This is a line item funded project that is broken into at least two phases. There are still some vagaries in funding and the final contracts have not been let, but we have a pretty good idea of what will happen as we progress into each phase. However before any final decisions can be made, we have to complete an Environmental Assessment that looks at all the proposed actions in the plan

and their effects and considers any viable alternatives. Soon, there will be a public review of this document (it is currently underway) which will give you a chance to comment on the plan if you so desire.

The first phase (funded for this year) involves work inside the mansion and the North Slave Quarters (NSQ) as well as some extensive grounds work, mostly on the northwest side of the site. If all goes as planned, a fire suppression system will be installed in the mansion and the NSQ as well as ducting for a climate management system. The two eastern rooms in the NSQ would be rehabilitated (essentially restored) to their structural appearance as the nurse's quarters, cook's

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Significant Historic Events in February

February 1, 1778

George Washington recommended that his ward, Jack Custis, buy land at once to offset the wartime depreciation of currency. Jack then set out to buy the Alexander track, which eventually became Arlington estate. The transaction was not fully accomplished until December 1778.

February 1, 1861

Texas, where Lieutenant Colonel Lee was stationed at the time, seceded from the Union.

February 3, 1774

John "Jack" Parke Custis and Eleanor "Nelly" Calvert were married at Mount Airy, the bride's home near Upper Marlborough, Maryland.

February 5, 1826

George Hadfield, the architect of Arlington House, died in Washington City at the age of 62. His obituary in the "National Intelligencer" included "Mr. Custis' House" in a list of buildings Mr. Hadfield designed in the Washington area.

February 8, 1865

General Lee received orders to assume the duties of General-in-Chief of the Armies of the Confederate States.

February 10, 1846

Mildred Childe Lee, the seventh child and fourth daughter of Robert and Mary Lee, was born at Arlington House. She was named for Lee's youngest sister, Catharine Mildred Lee, who had married Edward Vernon Childe, and lived with him in Paris.

February 10, 1860

Lee left Arlington at 6 a.m. to take command at San Antonio, Texas, which would be his last assignment in military service to the United States. On March 10, he wrote to his wife, "It was very sad to leave you & my departure grows harder to bear with years."

February 13, 1861

The Virginia secession convention convened in Richmond. There were 152 delegates chosen

by public vote. The majority of delegates desired to preserve the Union provided the North make concessions, and as long as the general government did not use force against a Commonwealth attempting to secede. The convention proceeded to study the situation and consider possibilities for compromise. The first vote on adopting an ordinance of secession was not taken until April 4, when it was defeated 88-45.

February 14, 1864

Mrs. Lee suggested that General Lee add their son, Robert, Jr., to his staff. Lee replied that "his company would be a great pleasure & comfort to me & he would be extremely useful to me in various ways. I have written to him to that effect. But I am opposed to officers surrounding themselves with their sons and relatives. It is wrong in principle & in that case the selection of offices would be made from private & social relations, rather than for the public good...I should prefer Rob's being in the line, in an independent position, where he could rise by his own merit & not through the recommendation of his relatives."

February 18, 1913

George Washington Custis Lee died at Ravensworth, near Annandale, Fairfax County, Virginia. He had retired as President of Washington and Lee College in 1897, and had spent his remaining years at Ravensworth making architectural drawings, doing gardening and enjoying a quiet, more secluded lifestyle.

February 21, 1825

The "National Intelligencer" summarized a speech made by GWP Custis at the annual meeting of the American Colonization Society in which Custis "mourned the existence of slavery to the South" and "rejoiced that there was, at length, a ground of hope that it will one day be removed."

February 22, 1732

George Washington was born at Pope's Creek, Northern Neck, Westmoreland County, Virginia.

February 22, 1830

In "The Birthnight," published by GWP Custis in his "Recollections of Washington," Custis told how the custom of celebrating Washington's birthday with balls had originated, emphasizing that Washington had always approved of and enjoyed such "rational and elegant pleasures of life" and was "partial to the amusements of the theatre."

February 22, 1832

GWP Custis participated in many local celebrations of the Centennial of Washington's birth. He painted a heroic portrait of the General watching the cannonade at the Battle of Trenton which was used to decorate the Union Hotel in Georgetown. He marched in an Alexandria parade and spoke to the Washington Society at Christ Church.

February 22, 1861

President Buchanan called off the customary Washington Day parade "for fear some untoward incident might occur."

President-elect Lincoln quietly left Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and slipped into Washington early the next morning so as to avoid possible difficulty in pro-Southern Baltimore.

February 27, 1841

Eleanor Agnes Lee, the fifth child of Robert and Mary Lee, was born at Arlington House.

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact Delphine Gross no later than the 20th of each month with availability dates and times to be posted the following month (Please call by February 20th with March information). Even if you are a regularly scheduled VIP please contact Delphine to confirm your availability. Again, the contact number is (703) 235-1530 ext. 227. Please leave the dates and times you are available on the voice mail. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Area Special Events

February 3-5

Special event, "Prelude to Gettysburg Discovery Weekend," begins in downtown Chambersburg PA and continues through nearby communities. Presentation by Jeffrey Wert and Ed Bearss at Wilson College Feb. 4 followed by book signing. \$85 package includes some meals, reception, encampment and more. www.chambersburg.org to register.

February 4

Special program, "Introduction to the Signal Corps," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick MD. 11 am-3 pm. Free with admission. www.civilwarmed.org or 301-695-1864.

Special program, "Freedom Won," focus is on African-American civilians and military at Endview Plantation in Newport News VA. Free with admission. www.endview.org or 757-887-1862.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House was the home of Robert E. Lee and his family for thirty years and is uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families. It is now preserved as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and the South.

Arlington House
The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Phone
703-235-1530

Web Site
<http://www.nps.gov/arho>

The Spectacle online
<http://www.nps.gov/arho/tour/spectacle.html>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Special program, "The Confederate Ethiopian Serenader," Civil War musical group portrayed at the Newsome House in Newport News VA. Noon-1:30 pm. www.newsomehouse.org or 757-247-2360.

Lecture, "Preserving the Memory of Frederick Douglass: The Restoration of the Douglass Home," at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria VA. 1 pm. \$6. Snow date is Feb. 11. www.fortward.org or 703-838-4848.

February 11

Special program, "Hearts at War, Valentine Traditions during the Civil War," documents and stories for adults at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond VA. 1-3 pm. \$10. Reservations. www.moc.org or 804-649-1861.

February 18

Lecture, by Richard McCaslin from his book, "Lee in the Shadow of Washington," at Stratford Hall (Lee's birthplace), just off Route 3 near Montross VA. Part of "The Path of Honor: From Stratford to Lexington — the Robert E. Lee Educational Series." 2 pm. Free. www.stratfordhall.org or 804-493-8038.

Movie, "Glory," at the Virginia War Museum in Newport News VA. Free with admission. www.warmuseum.org or 757-247-8523.

February 19

Walking tour, guided, covers the Civil War Encampment and the Gilmore Farm at Montpelier (VA), home of James Madison, near Orange. 2 pm. Free with Montpelier admission. www.montpelier.org or 540-672-2728.

February 25

Special program, "Controversial Confederates." Speakers will discuss Jubal Early, George Pickett, John Mosby and others at the Library of Virginia, 800 E. Broad St. in Richmond VA. Co-sponsored by the Museum of the Confederacy. 9 am-4 pm. Registration required. \$25. 804-649-1861 (extension 28) or www.moc.org.

From the Office Down the Hall (continued)

quarters and summer kitchen (furniture and exhibits are still dependent upon donations and, at this point, and are not included in this project). The NSQ also gets a new roof. A new underground bunker to house the equipment for the fire and climate management systems is planned to be built into the hillside beneath the road west of the vegetable garden. The old comfort station would be demolished and a new one built outside the core historic zone to replace it. Phase two (which is in line for next year's funding) would finish the climate management system and concentrate on re-landscaping the vegetable garden, returning it to near its historic dimensions and appearance, and re-grading the courtyard to better approximate the 1861 slope. Phase two also involves a rehabilitation/restoration of the South Slave Quarters' store room and smoke room and gives that building a new roof.

This plan concentrates any work inside the mansion and NSQ so that these important buildings would only have to be closed once (during phase one). However, while phase one is expected to last twelve to thirteen months, the mansion would not necessarily have to be closed for that entire time—but it *would* have to be empty. A more complete schedule is now coming into focus. Construction may start in July, but the House may not have to close for several months after that. It makes more sense for landscape and excavation work to take place first, in the warm summer months, and the more protected, inside work to begin in the late summer or early fall. That means we may have a wonderful opportunity to escort visitors into the empty rooms of the mansion and experience the rare view from inside—beneath the Dining Room arches, for example—rather than just peering in from the hallways. And this process has already begun. Although the changes thus far have been subtle, the site curator, Mary Troy, has already started packing the collections currently on display in the house. The packing will gain momentum as the spring progresses and we expect the house to be empty and ready for room tours by June.

(continued on page 4)

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Quire of Paper Pancakes

This is a dessert recipe for what we would now call crepes. Mildred Lee submitted this recipe to a cookbook of recipes from notable persons. Hers was the only female inclusion from the state of Virginia in the cookbook. Mildred described the dish as: “an old fashioned receipt, which we used to use at Arlington.”

Beat 16 eggs, add to them a quart of milk, a nutmeg, half a pound of flour, a pound of melted butter, a pound of sugar, and two gills of wine; take care the flour be not in lumps; butter the pan for the first pancake, run them as thin as possible, and when coloured, they are done; do not turn them, but lay them carefully in the dish, sprinkling powdered sugar between each layer; serve them up hot. This quantity will make four dozen pancakes.

Information from this article taken from *The Virginia House-wife* by Mary Randolph and *The Robert E. Lee Family Cooking and Housekeeping Book*.

Contributed by Kara Walker

From the Office Down the Hall (continued)

But what about us? What do we do when the House eventually closes? Even though the mansion will close, *the site* will remain open for business and I expect visitors to arrive in numbers similar to those we have now. As most of the construction will be limited to the courtyard and the northwestern portion of the site, we will still have the portico and the area in front of the house—that magnificent view of Washington—to use. We will also have the museum, the South Slave Quarters and the flower garden. So we will have plenty to do! With the furnishings gone, there will be a stronger need for staff and volunteers in period dress (to work in the empty rooms when the house is open and in the flower garden, museum and South Slave Quarters) to help impart an atmosphere of 1861. I also think we will be spreading the ranger staff thinner than usual as we try to keep visitors safe, monitor contractor activities and meet the Tourmobile. I am planning for a large tent to be placed on the south side of the South Slave Quarters where rangers and volunteers can greet visitors, help maintain a bookstore and form up tours out of the weather. No more

quiet days in the North Wing! Our volunteer staff will be more important than ever.

And when the project is over, we will still not be finished. After the contractors leave, we will finally have a chance to bring in our own preservation crews to work in the mansion to do window and plaster repairs, painting, and restore Custis’ hunting frescos high in the Center Hall.

Not all of this is funded and it is a very big project. We are reaching for the stars which, like the future, used to seem so distant. But the future has arrived. So now too, I think the stars are within our grasp. Alan Chadwick said, “We are the living links in a life force that moves and plays around and through us, binding the deepest soils with the farthest stars.” Or in the words of Dan Quayle: “The future will be better tomorrow.”

Kendell Thompson
Site Manager
Arlington House,
The Robert E. Lee Memorial

History Happenings

Remembering Ephriam Derricks

February is Black History Month. Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a renowned early 20th century historian and native Virginian, established Black History week in 1926 as a means of encouraging the study of African American history. Toward that end, one of the slaves of Arlington is profiled below.

After Mr. Custis’ death in 1857, the inventory of his estate included a list of 63 slaves. The last slave listed was Ephriam Derricks. Along with Nurse, Mammy, and George Clark, Ephriam lived in the north slave quarters. According to Mrs. Lee, Ephriam had a wife in Washington DC, and he usually spent the weekends with her in the city. For many years, Ephriam served as Mr. Custis’ valet. He often accompanied Mr. Custis out to the portico where the latter retired most evenings to smoke his cigar. He escorted Custis to his room each evening. When Selina Gray’s daughters returned to Arlington House in the 1920s to assist with the restoration, they stated that Ephriam slept on a pallet outside the Custises’ chamber. At 10 PM, Ephriam barred the doors in the center hall, signaling the end of the day at Arlington. Markie Williams once overheard Ephriam using the storeroom as a prayer closet.

Ephriam was likely the one slave who was present at the time of Custis’ death. According to Mrs. Lee, Custis “took leave of an old servant who attended in his room” among his last acts. After Custis’ death, Ephraim worked as a gardener. Robert E. Lee once complimented Ephriam on his flourishing vegetable crop. When Markie Williams visited Arlington in 1862, Ephriam was still living at Arlington. He informed Markie that he had survived a bout with typhoid fever, and asked to be remembered to the Lees. Areas associated with Ephriam include the storeroom, portico, Custis chamber, north slave quarter, and the vegetable garden.

Karen Kinzey, Historian

February 2006

Arlington House VIP Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Matt Abney 9:30-1:30	2 Charlotte Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	3 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	4 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00
5 Elene Paul 11:00-3:00 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30 Andrew Strait 1:30-4:00	6 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	7 Kathie Lipovac 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	8 Matt Abney 9:30-1:30	9 Charlotte Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	10 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	11 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Marmie Edwards 12:30-4:30 Hope Flanagan 1:00-4:00
12 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30	13 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	14 Kathie Lipovac 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	15 Matt Abney 9:30-1:30	16 Charlotte Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	17 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	18 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Bryant Davis 10:30-12:30 Marmie Edwards 11:00-4:30
19 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30 Andrew Strait 1:30-4:00	20 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	21 Kathie Lipovac 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	22 Matt Abney 9:30-1:30	23 Charlotte Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	24 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	25 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Vanna Lewis 10:00-4:00 Hope Flanagan 1:00-4:00
26 Elene Paul 11:00-3:00 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30 Andrew Strait 1:30-4:00	27 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	28 Kathie Lipovac 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	<div> <p>If you are available to volunteer, but are not on the calendar please call Delphine so you can be added to the schedule.</p> </div>			



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U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House
The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Spectacle is a monthly newsletter for the volunteers of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

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Comments? Write to:

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c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Volunteers Needed

The roster of active volunteers is in dire need of additional names! If you know anyone interested in joining our ranks please refer them to Delphine Gross, Volunteer Coordinator (703) 235-1530 ext. 227.

